The Space Between Us: A Social-Functional Emotions View of Ambivalent and Indifferent Workplace Relationships

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Workplace relationships are a cornerstone of management research. At the same time, there remain pressing calls for work relationships to be front and center in management literature, demanding an organizationally specific "relationship science." This article addresses these calls by unifying multiple scholarly fields of interest to develop a comprehensive understanding of interpersonal workplace relationships. Specifically, in this review, we move beyond the ten-dency to pit positive and negative relationships against each other and, instead, spotlight theory and research associated with ambivalent and indifferent relationships, which are prevalent and impactful yet persistently understudied. We organize our review into four streams: sources, outcomes, dynamics, and measurement. We then advance existing workplace relationships lit-erature by integrating the social functions of emotions perspective. In doing so, we move beyond the positive–negative dichotomy by implicating discrete emotions and their interpersonal func-tions for workplace relationships. We conclude by offering an agenda for future scholarship.

Keywords: *workplace relationships; affect; emotions; positive organizational behavior;*

In today's information-centric and collaborative workplace, employees inevitably interact and form connections with their coworkers. Indeed, with the 60-hr workweek now considered typical for most jobs, "the volume of interactions is headed toward infinity" (J. Miller & Miller, 2005: 110). Relationships with coworkers not only are a vital part of a workplace's social environment but also define it (Schneider, 1987) by shaping how people think, feel, and act (Kahn, 2007) and significantly influencing important organizational outcomes (Chiaburu & Harrison, 2008; Ferris, Liden, Munyon, Summers, Basik, & Buckley, 2009). Recognition that relationships play a critical role at work has provoked pleas for work relationships to be front and center in the management literature (Dutton & Ragins, 2007), calls for an organizationally specific "relationship science" (Berscheid, 1999), and an outpouring of reviews on relationships at work (e.g., Borgatti & Foster, 2003; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Dutton & Ragins, 2007; Ferris et al., 2009; P. Ingram & Zou, 2008). Consequently, the study of workplace relationships is becoming a cornerstone of management research.

However, existing perspectives on workplace relationships persistently characterize them as one-dimensional, positioning them along a bipolar continuum from positive to negative. Indeed, relationship scholars often pit positive and negative relationships against each other, describing them as supportive or antagonistic (Chiaburu & Harrison, 2008), life giving or life depleting (Dutton & Heaphy, 2003), energizing or de-energizing (Cross, Baker, & Parker, 2003), beneficial versus dysfunctional (Ragins, Cotton, & Miller, 2000), or friends versus enemies (e.g., Morrison & Wright, 2009; Sherf & Venkataramani, 2015). We believe this reliance on a positive–negative dichotomy belies the reality that many relationships are not strictly positive or negative. In fact, a sizable portion of individuals' personal and work networks consist of *ambivalent* relationships that are simultaneously positive and negative and *indifferent* relationships that are neither positive nor negative (Fingerman, 2009; Uchino, Holt-Lunstad, Smith, & Bloor, 2004). Yet while research on positive and negative relationships has proliferated, research on ambivalent and indifferent relationships has been slow to "arrive." Hence, our review focuses squarely on ambivalent and indifferent relationships in the workplace.

To better understand these specific relationships, we consider two building blocks that define and constitute relationships: interactions and emotions. *Interactions*, or social events in which relational partners influence each other's thoughts, emotions, and actions, occur over a bounded period of time (Hinde, 1979) and are the "living tissue" of relationships (Berscheid & Reis, 1998). Furthermore, we can understand little about a relationship without discerning the *emotions*, or short-term, valenced, affective responses to specific targets or events (Frijda, 1993; Lazarus, 1991), that partners feel in response to each other (Ferris et al., 2009). Interactions and emotions are reciprocally associated; interactions elicit emotional responses (e.g., happiness, boredom, envy; Anderson & Guerrero, 1998; Berscheid & Ammazzalorso, 2001) that color the way we experience and evaluate future interactions and our interaction partners (Hareli & Rafaeli, 2008; Tiedens & Leach, 2004). Across a chain of interactions, these emotional responses aggregate to form a summary of whether a relationship is assessed as positive, negative, ambivalent, or indifferent (De Dreu, West, Fischer, & MacCurtain, 2001).

To unpack how interactions and emotions coalesce around ambivalent and indifferent relationships, we adopt the social-functional view of emotions (also termed the social functions of emotions view; e.g., Elfenbein, 2007; Fischer & Manstead, 2008; Hareli & Rafaeli, 2008; Keltner & Haidt, 1999; Van Kleef, 2009). This perspective emphasizes not only that

social interactions affect individuals' own emotional reactions and subsequent behaviors and judgments about their interacting partners (Schwarz & Clore, 1983; Tiedens & Leach, 2004; Van Kleef, De Dreu, & Manstead, 2010) but that emotions have important interpersonal, or social, functions as well. Viewed through the social-functional emotions lens, emotional expressions in interactions serve as a conduit of communication about one's judgments, intentions, and relational orientations, thus shaping interaction partners' judgments, decisions, and behaviors (Morris & Keltner, 2000; Van Kleef, 2009). This view lends itself to studying ambivalent and indifferent relationships for several reasons. First, it not only complements the view that relationships are constituted by interactions and emotions but also advances it by modeling their reciprocal and dynamic influence (Hareli & Rafaeli, 2008). Second, it surmounts the popular yet surprisingly "unsocial" or *within-individual* perspective of emotions in interactions (e.g., Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996) whereby emotions are internal experiences that influence a focal individual's own cognitions and behaviors. It does so by illustrating that emotions are interpersonal phenomena: They send signals to others and transfer between partners. Last, it moves beyond the traditional emphasis on positive and negative moods (Casciaro, 2014) by implicating discrete emotions that provide differentiated information about peoples' intentions toward their interaction partners—a consideration heretofore neglected in relationships research. In sum, this view enables a more precise conception of ambivalent and indifferent relationships, allowing us to flesh out the "relational space between" individuals (Bradbury & Lichtenstein, 2000).

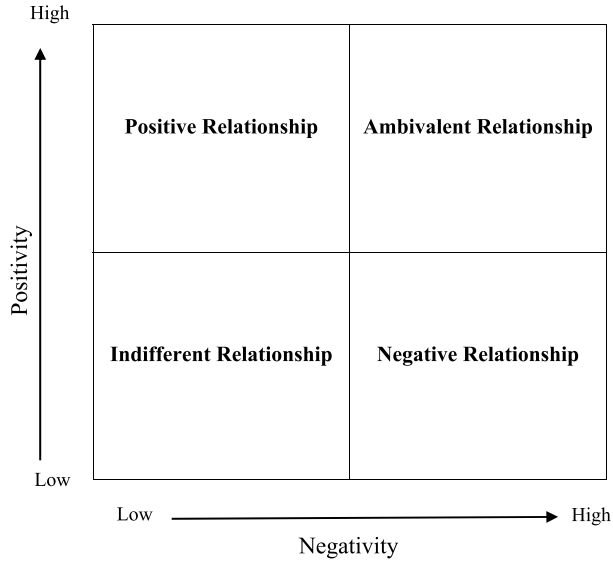
We begin our review by defining positive, negative, ambivalent, and indifferent work relationships. Second, we introduce the social-functional emotions perspective, detailing how it advances our understanding of workplace relationships. Third, we review four major streams of research associated with ambivalent and indifferent relationships: their sources, consequences, temporal dynamics, and measurement. We then link social interactions, discrete emotions, and workplace relationships with the four research streams. We conclude by offering an agenda for incorporating emotions into future theoretical and empirical investigations of work relationships.

The Conceptual Landscape: Defining Workplace Relationships

Existing definitions of workplace relationships, including those between supervisors and subordinates, leaders and followers, peer coworkers, and employees and external stakeholders (Ferris et al., 2009; Sias, 2005; Uzzi, 1997), reveal interactions and emotions as key components. With respect to interactions, relationships are conceived as associations between two individuals (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005) that have varying levels of influence (Reis, Sheldon, Gable, Roscoe, & Ryan, 2000), attachment (Reis & Patrick, 1996), or interdependence (Kelley et al., 1983) and involve coordinated dyadic actions directed at the accomplishment of common objectives or goals (Ferris et al., 2009). Highlighting their emotional undertones, definitions of relationships also include valence (Iacobucci & Ostrom, 19965), described as enduring positive or negative judgments, feelings, and behavioral intentions toward a relationship partner (Labianca & Brass, 2006; Sherf & Venkataramani, 2015).

However, research has largely overlooked complex relationships that are both positive and negative as well as relationships that lack affective tone (Bloor, Uchino, Hicks, & Smith, 2004). Yet psychological research exposes that relationships can be (and often are) not simply positive or negative and that current research methods may contribute to the neglect of these

Figure 1
Framework of Interpersonal Workplace Relationships



Note: Bloor, Uchino, Hicks, and Smith (2004).

types of relationships. Specifically, research on emotions and attitudes establishes that their positive and negative substrates tend to be statistically independent and/or separable dimensions (Cacioppo & Berntson, 1994; Larsen, McGraw, & Cacioppo, 2001). For instance, positive and negative experiences are processed separately and can be coactivated (e.g., Thompson, Zanna, & Griffin, 1995), as evidenced by neurological research demonstrating that they stimulate separate areas in the brain (Ahern & Schwartz, 1985). This work implies that traditional measures utilizing a single bipolar continuum ranging from negative to positive with "neutral" located in between likely confounds ambivalent and indifferent relationships because respondents may select the midpoint when reporting both their indifferent (*neither* positive *nor* negative) and ambivalent (*both* positive *and* negative) attitudes (Baek, 2010).

A set of scholars (Bloor et al., 2004; Bushman & Holt-Lunstad, 2009; Uchino et al., 2012) has extended awareness of separate positive and negative substrates to relationships. They arrange relationships on independent continuums of positive and negative valence, such that relationships are not only positive (high positivity/low negativity) and negative (low positivity/high negativity) but also ambivalent (high positivity/high negativity) and indifferent (low positivity/low negativity; see Figure 1). Though this framework is far more established in family and community samples (Fingerman, Hay, & Birditt, 2004; Uchino et al., 2004) than in management, we believe it offers a valuable blueprint to organize our review of these four types of relationships in the work domain. We advance this framework by unpacking interactions and emotions as key aspects of relationships to establish a more inclusive definition of work relationships: *an aggregate set of interactions between two*

people, often directed at the accomplishment of task objectives, that can be characterized as positive and/or negative or lacking affective tone. Because coverage of positive and negative relationships is abundant, we describe them briefly, and instead point a spotlight on ambivalent and indifferent relationships.

Positive Relationships

Positive work relationships are marked by pleasant interpersonal interactions and emotions and involve a genuine sense of relatedness and mutuality, where both parties improve and enrich each other's experiences (Dutton & Heaphy, 2003). These include work friendships, high leader–member exchange (LMX) relationships, mutual developmental relationships, high-quality connections, strong ties, and communal relationships (Casciaro & Lobo, 2008; Dutton & Heaphy, 2003; Eby & Allen, 2012; Granovetter, 1973; Kram & Isabella, 1985; Methot, LePine, Podsakoff, & Christian, 2016). Theoretically, positive relationships are considered intimate, flexible, and resilient (Eby & Allen, 2012), are marked by feelings of positive affect (Casciaro, 2014) and heightened vitality (Dutton & Heaphy, 2003), are free of calculative or instrumental norms (Silver, 1990), and can withstand strain even when faced with demanding circumstances (Dutton & Heaphy, 2003).

Negative Relationships

Representing from 2% to 8% of social networks (Labianca & Brass, 2006), purely negative relationships are rare in the workplace. As in the literature on positive relationships, a multitude of constructs capture negative relationships, including difficult relationships, adversarial ties, toxic relationships, exploitative relationships, and enemies (Berscheid, 1999; Chiaburu & Harrison, 2008; Eby & Allen, 2012; Galinsky & Schweitzer, 2015; Labianca & Brass, 2006). Individuals in negative relationships have an enduring and recurring set of negative feelings and intentions toward each other (Labianca & Brass, 2006) and have interactions characterized by conflict, criticism, jealousy, rejection, and interference that are generally detrimental to relationships (K. Brooks & Dunkel Schetter, 2011). These relationships are often mutual and persistent (Labianca & Brass, 2006), have a negative tone (Hess, Omdahl, & Fritz, 2006), and are likely to spiral downward when faced with difficult situations (Dutton & Heaphy, 2003).

Ambivalent Relationships

Ambivalent relationships involve coactivated feelings of positivity and negativity toward a relational partner (Bushman & Holt-Lunstad, 2009) and are captured by research on competitive friends (P. Ingram & Roberts, 2000), blended relationships (Bridge & Baxter, 1992), and competent jerks and lovable fools (Casciaro & Lobo, 2008). Compared to the vast research on purely positive or negative relationships, ambivalent relationships are markedly understudied, especially in workplace contexts (cf. Methot et al., 2016; Pratt & Doucet, 2000). Although some recent reviews are dedicated to the role of ambivalence in organizations (Baek, 2010; Rothman, Pratt, Rees, & Vogus, in press), none are geared toward ambivalence in workplace relationships or even in relationships more generally.

However, there is mounting evidence that ambivalent relationships exist in organizations. Though this research does not provide a precise estimation of relationships that are ambivalent, in studies of undergraduate and community samples, individuals report that ambivalent ties frequently define their social networks (e.g., spouse, coworkers, family members, friends), with comparable numbers of positive and ambivalent relationships and more ambivalent than negative relationships (Fingerman et al., 2004; Uchino et al., 2004). These frequencies likely translate to the workplace: Individuals experience mixed feelings about their work groups and organizations (Kreiner & Ashforth, 2004; Sluss & Ashforth, 2007), mentors may feel both proud of and threatened by their protégés (Eby, Butts, Durley, & Ragins, 2010), and employees feel ambivalently about their customers (Pratt & Doucet, 2000), managers (K. Ingram, 2015; Lee, Martin, Thomas, & Guillaume, 2015), colleagues (Zou & Ingram, 2013), and friends (P. Ingram & Zou, 2008). For instance, Pratt and Doucet (2000) describe how employees expressed feeling ambivalently toward managers who are demanding but also indispensable sources of support and toward customers whom they enjoy helping but who also slow their productivity. Zou and Ingram (2013) observe that in the work context, relationships are a source of friendship as well as stress and competition, so competing with friends is an inescapable reality of work.

Indifferent Relationships

Indifferent relationships are characterized by low frequency of contact, involvement, emotional intensity, depth, or importance (Fingerman, 2009; Marsden & Campbell, 1984). They include casual coworkers (Bushman & Holt-Lunstad, 2009), information peers (Kram & Isabella, 1985), consequential strangers (Blau & Fingerman, 2009), nonintimate ties (Fingerman, 2009), acquaintances (Lin & Dumin, 1986), peripheral relationships (Cummings & Higgins, 2006), and weak ties (Granovetter, 1973). Research finds that indifferent relationships are common at work (Ducharme & Martin, 2000), possibly because they require little time and energy to maintain (Blau & Fingerman, 2009). Indeed, when asked to think about an indifferent relationship, nearly 50% of participants nominated their coworkers (Kumashiro & Sedikides, 2005), such as leisure companions (e.g., coworkers who share lunch breaks), daily interaction partners (e.g., clients), service providers (e.g., office janitors), and past associates (e.g., a former team member).

Given how common indifferent relationships seem to be, it is surprising how rarely management scholars study them. This may be because it is difficult to conceive of an interaction that is devoid of either positive or negative emotion (Casciaro, 2014) or because they appear inconsequential (Fingerman, 2009), disposable (Blau & Fingerman, 2009), or substitutable (Fingerman, 2004). But whereas some scholars describe indifferent relationships as "exactly neutral in their evaluative content" (Eagly & Chaiken, 1998: 271), others describe a range of nonintimacy (Fingerman, 2009) with a lower limit where the relationship barely rises above the threshold of acquaintanceship (e.g., "nodding relationships"; Lofland, 1995) to an upper limit where the relationship borders on positive (e.g., continuously successful task-focused interactions; Blau & Fingerman, 2009). Though some scholars have questioned whether indifferent ties can be considered relationships (Fingerman, 2004), we argue they should be, as they include interactions between individuals who know each other, continuity in contact patterns, and people who have an impact on one another's daily mood, well-being, and work behavior (Fingerman, 2009; Granovetter, 1973; Kelley et al., 1983; Kram & Isabella, 1985; Noller, Feeney, & Peterson, 2013).

This overview reinforces that work relationships are often more complex than just positive or negative. By shifting the discussion of work relationships toward examining the role of discrete emotions as consequences and causes of interactions and, thus, relationships, our understanding of work relationships may be significantly enhanced (Ferris et al., 2009; Tiedens & Leach, 2004). Thus, in the next section, we introduce the social functions of emotions lens and use it to develop a deeper understanding of indifferent and ambivalent work relationships.

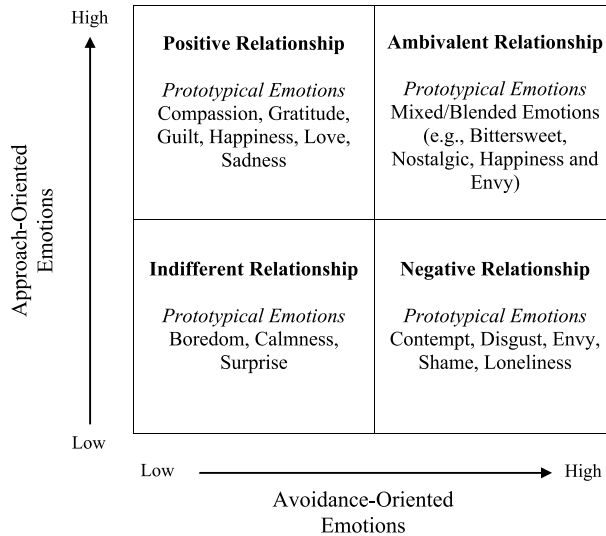
Integrating the Social Functions of Emotions Lens

A burgeoning literature suggests that emotions color our social interactions, influencing not only those who feel and express them but also those who perceive those expressions (Elfenbein, 2007; Hareli & Rafaeli, 2008; Morris & Keltner, 2000; Van Kleef, 2009). Moving beyond the traditional within-person perspective that focuses on how emotions influence an individual's own cognitions and behaviors (e.g., Forgas, 1995; Isen, 1987), the social-functional theory of emotions highlights that discrete emotions expressed through facial expressions, vocalization cues, and body language are observable cues in social interactions that guide how interactions with others evolve into the four different types of relationships by evoking specific inferences or affective reactions in others (Van Kleef, 2009).

First, prior research demonstrates that discrete emotional expressions afford differentiated information to interaction partners about the expresser's beliefs, intentions, and feelings (Morris & Keltner, 2000; Van Kleef, 2009), enabling observers to make sense of their interaction partners. For example, an individual's expression of contempt in an interaction is a signal of disapproval, condescension, and exclusion (Fischer & Roseman, 2007; Izard, 1997); this expression leads the interacting partner to infer he or she should avoid, or disengage from, the relationship (Melwani & Barsade, 2011). Similarly, expressed anger signals coldness and potential aggression, suggesting partners ought to move away (Clark, Pataki, & Carver, 1996; Van Kleef et al., 2010), and expressed ambivalence can signal a lack of morality, suggesting to partners that they should not trust the expresser (Belkin & Rothman, in press). By contrast, expressing sadness signals warmth and a call for help, drawing others closer (Clark & Taraban, 1991; Van Kleef et al., 2010). Indeed, emotions such as sadness, gratitude, and appreciation have been shown to be important for the successful maintenance of bonds in relationships and groups (Algoe, Haidt, & Gable, 2008; Gordon, Impett, Kogan, Oveis, & Keltner, 2012) because they signal cooperative and prosocial intentions (Rothman & Magee, 2016).

Second, emotions also evoke "complementary and reciprocal emotions in others that help individuals respond to significant social events" (Keltner & Haidt, 1999: 511). Because emotions can be contagious (Hatfield, Cacioppo, & Rapson, 1994), expressions by one interaction partner can unconsciously spread to the other partner, stimulating similar emotional states. Expressions of embarrassment lead partners to feel embarrassed as well (R. S. Miller, 1987). Expressions of anger or happiness in computer-mediated negotiations (Van Kleef, De Dreu, & Manstead, 2004a, 2004b) and expressions of positive mood in face-to-face negotiations (Barsade, 2002) have been shown to elicit similar emotions in one's partner. Other research suggests that emotional expressions can consistently evoke complementary but different emotions in others: Expressions of distress elicit sympathy-related responses in observers (Eisenberg, Fabes, Fultz, & Shell, 1989), and expressions of anger elicit fear responses in observers (reviewed in Dimberg & Ohman, 1996). In turn, these emotions will

Figure 2
Mapping the Social Functions of Emotions Onto Workplace Relationships



then influence the recipient's relationship-oriented attitudes and behaviors (Forgas, 1995), such as the extent to which they cooperate (Barsade, 2002) and help others (Blader & Rothman, 2014).

We build on this literature and the notion that emotions broadly serve two interpersonal functions[1]—*approach*, whereby individuals establish or maintain connections with others, and *avoidance*, whereby individuals distance the self from others (Adams & Kleck, 2003; Carver & Harmon-Jones, 2009)—to explain how emotions felt and expressed in work interactions are critical to understanding how interactions unfold and evolve into positive, negative, ambivalent, and indifferent workplace relationships. We integrate the social functions of emotions lens with the 2 × 2 typology of relationship valence to demonstrate how the recurring experience and expression of emotions in interactions can constitute various relationship configurations.

As shown in Figure 2, positive relationships are associated with emotions in the high-approach/low-avoidance quadrant. For example, the expression of happiness signals a desire to engage (Fridlund, 1994), and the expression of sadness serves as a call for support and connection (Clark & Taraban, 1991); thus, both elicit affiliative reactions from observers that are associated with positive relationships (R. J. Davidson, 1992). In contrast, negative relationships are associated with emotions in the high-avoidance/low-approach quadrant; for example, expressing contempt conveys social exclusion, which triggers corresponding levels of contempt in observers (Melwani & Barsade, 2011), perpetuating negative relationships (Gottman & Levenson, 1985). Indifferent relationships are captured by low-approach/low-avoidance emotions and can either be a function of the relative absence of emotions in a relationship (i.e., affective neutrality) or involve a single discrete emotion that conveys neither a desire to approach nor a desire to avoid; surprise,

for instance, carries information about unexpected events (Ruffman & Keenan, 1996) but signals neither approach nor avoidance. Ambivalent relationships are associated with high-approach/high-avoidance emotions. This can result from the simultaneous experience of two distinct and contradictory emotions that signal both approach *and* avoidance (e.g., tensions between cooperation and competition may trigger conflicting emotions such as happiness and envy) or can be a function of emotions that inherently have mixed approach and avoidance signals (e.g., organizational change events that trigger bittersweetness or nostalgia). The expression of such emotions, often as tension (Rothman, 2011), may lead observers to "catch" emotional ambivalence (Rothman & Wiesenfeld, 2007) and, over time, form ambivalent relationships.

Below, we highlight that while scholars have just started to scratch the surface in understanding ambivalent and indifferent relationships, many research questions remain, and we describe how a social-functional emotions perspective helps us answer some of these questions.

Indifferent and Ambivalent Relationships: Streams of Research

We faced two key challenges in conducting our review. First, because the study of personal relationships is multidisciplinary, research on indifferent and ambivalent relationships largely exists outside the work domain, primarily in social and family psychology (e.g., spouses, siblings, in-laws). Second, the research on ambivalence in particular that does exist in the work domain is rarely focused on relationships; rather, it involves phenomena such as emotions (Rothman, 2011), identities (Wang & Pratt, 2007), and attitudes (Piderit, 2000). To combat these issues, we set the boundaries of this review by using search terms related to ambivalent and indifferent relationships, including *ambivalent relationship*, *indifferent relationship*, *neutral relationship*, *workplace and ambivalence*, *workplace and indifference*, and *emotions and ambivalence*; conducting a reverse search for articles citing foundational studies on ambivalence and indifference in relationships; and combing through literature we considered relevant to both ambivalence and indifference but that may not be termed as such, for example, *cooperation and competition.* We restricted our review to articles and books examining ambivalence and indifference (1) in the workplace and (2) in personal relationships in, or that may translate to, the work setting (such as adult relationships, rather than family). We do, however, loosen these restrictions where complementary research exists to aid in drawing conclusions.

Using the social-functional emotions approach as our organizing framework, we review the (1) sources, (2) outcomes, (3) temporal dynamics, and (4) measures of ambivalent and indifferent relationships. In each section, we discuss how emotions are a critical but missing mechanism. Specifically, we map how discrete emotions are often the conduit by which interactions at work transition into relationships (Stream 1), are the mechanism through which relationships influence work and nonwork outcomes (Stream 2), and influence how relationships unfold over time (Stream 3). Much of the research we uncovered explores ambivalent relationships; significantly less research has investigated indifferent relationships. We draw conclusions about indifferent relationships where possible but identify this as a critical gap in existing research on workplace relationships.

Stream 1: Sources of Ambivalence and Indifference in Workplace Relationships

Psychologists and sociologists have divergent perspectives on the sources of ambivalent and indifferent relationships. Specifically, psychologists tend to view individual differences as their drivers, while sociologists focus on the broader environment, highlighting that these relationships arise from norms, values, and organizational factors (Wang & Pratt, 2007). Integrating these two differing perspectives enables us to delve into why indifferent and ambivalent relationships form. We focus on three main categories of antecedents: individual traits, dyadic-level interactions, and contextual influences.

Ambivalent relationships. Individual-level factors, such as demographics and personality traits, can foster ambivalent relationships. For instance, age buffers individuals from forming ambivalent relationships because older adults are better able to regulate their emotions (Carstensen, 1995) and view their relational partners' actions in a more favorable light, even during episodes of conflict (Blanchard-Fields & Coats, 2008). Furthermore, Collela and Varma (2001) found subordinates' disability status generated ambivalent LMX relationships, with nondisabled leaders feeling ambivalently toward disabled followers because feelings of aversion and hostility clashed with sympathy and compassion. Individuals' attachment styles—systematic patterns of relational expectations, emotions, and behaviors resulting from experiences with attachment figures in early childhood—influence their goals, cognitions, emotions, and behaviors across all interpersonal situations (e.g., Fraley & Shaver, 2000), including work (Hazan & Shaver, 1990). Individuals governed by an anxious attachment style will likely develop ambivalent relationships (Mikulincer, Shaver, Bar-On, & Ein-Dor, 2010) because their desires for intimacy paired with fears of abandonment translate into seeking closeness from their partner while overemphasizing their partner's potentially negative traits and intentions (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2005). In addition, individuals' personality traits may predispose them to forming ambivalent relationships. Zou and Ingram (2013) found that managers who are high in self-monitoring—the extent to which individuals are attuned to social cues and are able to adapt their public presentation and behavior—are likely to view their relationships as ambivalent (in the form of friendships with competitors) because they are more likely to identify changes in relational dynamics across situations and are also more comfortable maintaining complex relationships because they can shift their interaction style to fit the situation. Similarly, highly neurotic individuals are more likely to have ambivalent relationships because they are attuned to and uncomfortable with internal and interpersonal conflict and contradiction (Fingerman, Chen, Hay, Cichy, & Lefkowitz, 2006); while this work was conducted in a family setting, neurotic individuals may form more ambivalent relationships in the workplace as well.

At the dyadic level, research indicates that relationships may become ambivalent as a result of the coexistence of conflicting norms, expectations, goals, or roles; perceived similarity; and interpersonal familiarity. First, developing and maintaining relationships at work requires individuals to balance professional norms of impartiality, confidentiality, and evaluation with personal norms of favoritism, openness, and acceptance, and this tension may foster ambivalent relationships (Bridge & Baxter, 1992; Connidis & McMullin, 2002; Oglensky, 2008; Pratt & Doucet, 2000). At work, then, "the same forces that create closeness, trust, and affect in interpersonal networks are also associated with rivalry born of redundant resources, information, and capability" (Zou & Ingram, 2013: 3). Second, relationships are

also susceptible to becoming ambivalent when partners are highly similar. Zou and Ingram (2013) found that managers are more likely to feel competitively toward friends who are similar in terms of gender, social rank, and social network composition and configuration; these similarities may also make partners' successes more painful (Tesser, 1988). Mentors, too, are more likely to have ambivalent relationships with protégés who achieve peer status relative to those who remain lower status (Kram, 1983). Third, ambivalent relationships may result from intense closeness (Bridge & Baxter, 1992; Thompson & Holmes, 1986). Indeed, some research argues that "commitments are about ambivalence" (Brickman, 1987: 15) and "familiarity breeds ambivalence" (M. E. Brooks & Highhouse, 2006: 105). Ambivalence may also be more likely to occur in relationships that are difficult to terminate, like a supervisor–subordinate relationship (Merton & Barber, 1963).

Although individual and dyadic sources of ambivalence are relatively well studied, contextual sources are described as "elusive or highly contingent" (Plambeck & Weber, 2010: 705). In this modest body of work, the literature frequently describes organizational complexity and dualities as environmental sources of ambivalence, including ambivalent relationships. For instance, Ashforth, Rogers, Pratt, and Pradies (2014) describe organizations as being particularly complex and defined by paradoxes, dilemmas, tensions, and dialectics. Conflicting organizational climates, such as a dual focus on competition and cooperation (Galinsky & Schweitzer, 2015), ethicality and rule bending (Myer, Thoroughgood, & Mohammed, 2016), or empathy and detachment (Pratt & Doucet, 2000), send mixed messages that may elicit relational ambivalence (Pratt & Doucet, 2000). Furthermore, Bridge and Baxter (1992) found that organizational formalization—the extent to which an organization emphasizes formal roles rather than specific, unique individuals who occupy those roles—generates ambivalent relationships. That is, because highly formalized organizations may discourage social interaction, they can elicit tension between work colleagues who are also friends.

Indifferent relationships. Our review of the sources of indifferent relationships uncovered a dearth of research across levels, with no research to our knowledge addressing organization-level sources. At the individual level, research suggests individuals with an avoidant attachment style are more likely to form indifferent relationships (Mikulincer et al., 2010) because they strive to stay emotionally distant from relational partners, thus avoiding closeness and interdependence (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2005). At the dyadic level, indifferent relationships may form when individuals withdraw from interpersonal conflict (Ashforth et al., 2014) by emotionally distancing themselves from those whom they perceive to be the source (Bushman & Holt-Lunstad, 2009; Coats & Blanchard-Fields, 2008). Furthermore, individuals who have few similarities may develop and maintain an indifferent relationship, as they find little common ground upon which to relate (Blau & Fingerman, 2009). Last, because relationships require effort, those that exist for longer durations may also become indifferent if they are not actively maintained (Burt, 1992; Levin, Walter, & Murnighan, 2011).

Integrating an emotions lens (interactions→emotions→relationships). Whereas various literatures have uncovered individual, dyadic, and contextual influences as sources of ambivalent and indifferent relationships, we suggest emotions are the fundamental mechanism underlying most of these effects. Specifically, interactions are events that trigger emotions (Dimotakis, Scott, & Koopman, 2011), and these emotions shape individuals' evaluations of the interaction and their partners, which in turn affect relationship valence. For instance, at

the individual level, anxiously attached individuals develop ambivalent relationships because they simultaneously experience hope and fear about having intimate interactions; the social functions of emotions view suggests these emotions lead individuals to both approach and avoid their interaction partner, thus fostering an ambivalent relationship. At the dyadic level, similarities in gender, rank, and social networks increase the likelihood of developing ambivalent relationships because they foster not only friendly interactions but also social comparison and competition (Zou & Ingram, 2013). The social functions of emotions literature tells us these types of interactions are likely to breed both pleasant and anxious emotions, which should, over time, explain ambivalent relationship development. At the organizational level, conflicting climates send mixed messages, triggering conflicting emotions that may elicit relational ambivalence. Individual-level propensities, dyadic factors, and organizational conditions may also interact in organizations to produce ambivalent emotions and, in turn, ambivalent relationships. To illustrate, Fong and Tiedens (2002) found being a woman in a high-status position increases the incidence of mixed emotions—happiness from achieving the lofty goal of high status and sadness from holding a nonstereotypic gender role. These ambivalent emotions may spread from high-status women to others with whom they interact and, over time, foster ambivalent relationships across levels.

Emotions may also explain the development and persistence of indifferent relationships. Individuals with an avoidance attachment style may experience and express emotions related to detachment and boredom—conveying neither approach nor avoidance motivations—signaling to a partner not to attempt intimacy, ultimately manifesting in an indifferent relationship. Dissimilarity between individuals at the dyadic level, as well as a relatively monotonous job or organizational context, may also lead individuals to experience boredom, which may be perceived by a partner as a lack of interest and ultimately lead to an indifferent relationship.

Stream 2: Outcomes of Ambivalence and Indifference in Workplace Relationships

Our review of the outcomes of ambivalent and indifferent relationships suggests that research emphasizes the individual level, with comparatively less work exploring dyadic and organizational outcomes. We highlight not only what outcomes have been examined thus far but also the deficits (also see Rothman et al., in press, for a recent review of the outcomes of phenomena of ambivalence, including relational ambivalence).

Ambivalent relationships. At the individual level, ambivalent relationships have divergent outcomes. On one hand, research mainly conducted in the family domain links ambivalent relationships with detrimental health outcomes (Uchino, Holt-Lunstad, Uno, & Flinders, 2001) and suggests they are even more detrimental than purely negative relationships (Holt-Lunstad, Uchino, Smith, & Hicks, 2007). Because ambivalent relationships can be unpredictable, they are associated with increased stress (Uchino, Holt-Lunstad, Uno, Campo, & Reblin, 2007), cardiovascular reactivity (Holt-Lunstad et al., 2007), ambulatory blood pressure (Holt-Lunstad, Uchino, Smith, Olson-Cerny, & Nealey-Moore, 2003), and cellular aging (Uchino et al., 2012). On the other hand, some research suggests that ambivalent relationships may also have functional workplace outcomes. Individuals experiencing emotional ambivalence are more cognitively flexible, which enhances their ability to attend to divergent perspec-

tives and engage in balanced consideration of those perspectives (Rothman & Melwani, in press). Accordingly, individuals in ambivalent relationships may be better able to collaborate, cope with competition, improve information exchange, and display higher job performance (P. Ingram & Roberts, 2000; Zou & Ingram, 2013) because of the ambivalent emotions these relationships engender. Furthermore, Guarana and Hernandez (2016) suggest that individuals who can accurately identify the causes of their ambivalence (e.g., a relationship partner) are better able to process relevant situational cues that enable effective decision making.

Research on the dyadic-level consequences of ambivalent relationships is sparse, particularly within the management literature. The existing research suggests that individuals report increased feelings of stress in response to ambivalent relationships and exchanges (Uchino et al., 2007), but they also feel trust, empathy, and sympathy (P. Ingram & Zou, 2008; Pratt & Pradies, 2011) and demonstrate commitment to their ambivalent relationship partner by accepting both the cost and the rewards inherent in the relationship (Brickman, 1987; Bushman & Holt-Lunstad, 2009). Guarana and Hernandez (2015) propose that, within leader–follower dyads, ambivalence in interpersonal interactions can create mutually functional outcomes, such as reciprocal problem solving and idea sharing by expanding partners' joint cognitive processing capabilities. However, these relationships may not always be positive; for example, P. Ingram and Roberts (2000) found that friendly competitors were unlikely to be honest in their dealings with one another. Research on the organizational implications of ambivalent relationships is also sparse, but what work exists suggests their effects are positive. For instance, ambivalent relationships between managers in competing hotels led to notable improvements in revenue per room (P. Ingram & Roberts, 2000).

Indifferent relationships. Most research on the outcomes of indifferent relationships at work centers on weak ties, which are indifferent as a function of their affective neutrality and lack of emotional investment (Granovetter, 1973). This particular type of indifferent relationship has the benefit of acting to bridge different social groups who provide unique, nonredundant information that then enhances career success (Granovetter, 1973; Lin & Dumin, 1986) and on-the-job creativity (Baer, 2010). In addition, indifferent ties can be low-risk sounding boards for ideas and for rehearsing the disclosure of secrets to intimate partners (Afifi & Steuber, 2009; Perry-Smith & Mannucci, in press); they can serve a specialized function in a limited context (e.g., a helpful information technology worker; Fingerman, 2009); they can be dormant, but available in an emergency (Levin et al., 2011); and they can reinforce compartmentalized aspects of one's identity at work (e.g., a working mother who suppresses her "parent" identity to emphasize her "employee" identity with an arm's-length work acquaintance; Sluss & Ashforth, 2007). There is also evidence that combining strongly positive and indifferent relationships in one's networks is valuable: Networks with a balanced composition of close and indifferent ties are linked to greater resistance to infection (Cohen, Doyle, Skoner, Rabin, & Gwaltey, 1997), enhanced mental health (Fiori, Antonucci, & Cortina, 2006), and decreased mortality risk (Litwin & Shiovitz-Ezra, 2006). Having indifferent relationships also enables individuals to better socially integrate in their communities, improving their quality of life (Berkman, Glass, Brissette, & Seeman, 2000). While it is unclear whether indifferent relationships characterized by a discrete emotion such as surprise would function similarly, we suspect this form is responsible for findings that indifferent relationships can provide "reminders of a valued past self" (Fingerman, 2009: 78), for example, receiving a

holiday card from a former coworker with whom one had an indifferent relationship sparks a connection to one's past (Fingerman & Griffiths, 1999).

While we were not able to identify research pinpointing dyadic outcomes of indifferent relationships, research on organization-level outcomes of indifferent relationships shows they have a positive influence on organizational innovation (Ruef, 2002).

Integrating an emotions lens (relationships→emotions→outcomes). Whereas various literatures have uncovered individual-, dyadic-, and organization-level consequences of ambivalent and indifferent relationships, the mechanisms by which these effects occur are still being explored. We suggest that emotions are a key mechanism driving the effects of ambivalent and indifferent relationships on workplace outcomes. At the individual level, interpersonal stress, negative affect, and reduced emotional support from ambivalent relationship partners have been offered as possible affective mechanisms explaining the effect of ambivalent relationships on detrimental health outcomes. In addition, we suggest that emotional ambivalence may be the underlying mechanism by which ambivalent relationships yield a host of positive outcomes at both the individual and the dyadic level. In particular, research building on the social functions of emotions perspective has already linked the experience of emotional ambivalence with outcomes such as enhanced creativity (Fong, 2006), increased judgment accuracy (Rees, Rothman, Lehavy, & Sanchez-Burks, 2013), and strategic decision making (Rothman & Melwani, in press). At the dyadic level, research taking a social function of emotions view has suggested that the expression of emotional ambivalence in social interactions signals low dominance and, thus, inspires assertiveness in observers and encourages problem solving that promotes discovery and development of agreements that integrate both parties' wishes (Rothman & Northcraft, 2015). Ambivalent emotions can also spread from expresser to observer or elicit complementary emotional responses, such as empathy (Rothman & Wiesenfeld, 2007). Shared ambivalent emotions can enable leaders to empower followers (Rothman & Melwani, in press) and improve collaborative outcomes (Guarana & Hernandez, 2016), and complementary emotional responses such as empathy can elicit greater helping (P. Ingram & Zou, 2008). Similarly, affective neutrality in an indifferent relationship may also transfer from expresser to observer, and this lack of emotion or shared indifference may enable relationship partners to worry less about maintaining the relationship and instead engage in critical evaluation and task conflict (L. R. Davidson & Duberman, 1982). Thus, integrating this emotions perspective allows us to see how ambivalence and neutrality may drive the effects of ambivalent and indifferent relationships.

Stream 3: Temporal Dynamics in Ambivalent and Indifferent Relationships

Our review of the extant literature suggests ambivalent and indifferent relationships may be prone to change. For example, individuals are often driven to resolve the "sense of disequilibrium, confusion, apprehension, and loss of control" ambivalence creates (Ashforth et al., 2014: 1460), and indifferent relationships are prone to either strengthen or dissolve (Ferris et al., 2009). Such relationships experience short-term fluctuations, whereby a relationship sentiment can remain relatively stable (e.g., I like my colleague) but display significant variation in the valence of interpersonal interactions during the day (e.g., My colleague criticized my idea in our morning meeting, and I felt resentful toward her; Dimotakis et al., 2011). They may also fluctuate over the longer term, where a series of interactions may alter

the foundational nature of a relationship (Ballinger & Rockmann, 2010). To date, existing research has yet to adequately empirically capture the dynamic nature of indifferent and ambivalent relationships, instead measuring these constructs using overarching statements and cross-sectional measures.

Ambivalent relationships. Several classic responses to ambivalence appear to elicit short-term relationship fluctuations. Individuals may attempt to "move toward" their ambivalent partners by attempting to become closer to the source of ambivalence or "move against" them by displaying aggression, sabotage, and undermining behaviors (Ashforth et al., 2014; Pratt & Doucet, 2000). Furthermore, individuals in ambivalent relationships may employ temporal splitting responses, in which they "alternate between love and hate by viewing the relationship target totally positively today, but totally negatively tomorrow" (Pratt & Doucet, 2000: 219). Overall, ambivalence elicits a punctuated process that may transform the relationship into one that is more positive, more negative, or positive one day and negative the next.

Research presents competing evidence regarding whether ambivalent relationships change over long periods of time or are relatively stable. On one hand, Thompson and Holmes state, "Ambivalence is viewed as the stimulus for change in a relationship" (1986: 503). Ambivalence may threaten a relationship's durability, as individuals who respond to ambivalent relationships through avoiding, or "moving away" from, the target of their ambivalence may gradually escape by physically isolating themselves and establishing emotional distance (Ashforth et al., 2014; Bushman & Holt-Lunstad, 2009). On the other hand, ambivalent relationships may remain relatively stable over time. As individuals navigate their feelings of ambivalence, they may become more trusting and committed to each other (Brickman, 1987; Pratt & Pradies, 2011) through responses including compromise, an ongoing process of mutually accommodating both positive and negative orientations (Pratt & Pradies, 2011), or holism, "the complete, simultaneous, and typically conscious acceptance of both opposing orientations" (Ashforth et al., 2014: 1465). Some work also suggests such increased trust and commitment from ambivalence occurs either because the positive aspects of the relationship outweigh its negatives and make it difficult to want to give up the relationship entirely or because of normative obligations, such as shared social groups (Bushman & Holt-Lunstad, 2009).

Indifferent relationships. A small body of research suggests indifferent relationships may also be dynamic in the short term, as they cycle in and out of peoples' relationship circles (Fingerman, 2009). This is consistent with research indicating that personal network dynamics have a "core-periphery" structure, where core (i.e., close) members remain in the network over time while peripheral (i.e., indifferent) members frequently come and go (Morgan, Neal, & Carder, 1997). Furthermore, rather than entirely exiting one's network, indifferent relationships may only display short-term changes if they are activated—that is, come to mind—in a given situation (Smith, Menon, & Thompson, 2012). To our knowledge, no research to date explicitly pinpoints short-term changes in indifferent relationships, likely because they do not draw individuals' attention enough to motivate a direct response; however, we revisit this issue in our section on future research.

With respect to longer-term changes, Fingerman states that indifferent ties and intimate ties are "intertwined in a fluid state across the life span" (2004: 192) and offers two broad categories of indifferent ties: ties that were once intimate or that will become intimate in the future and ties that remain weak in perpetuity. The former category implies the strengthening and

deteriorating of relationships that is demonstrated by phase models, such that acquaintances can evolve into friendships (Altman & Taylor, 1973; Ferris et al., 2009; Kram, 1983), and an intimate tie can dissolve amicably (as a result of factors such as job mobility, divergent interests, inattention, or other time demands), engendering an indifferent tie as a result (Marsiglio & Scanzoni, 1995). This lack of contact often causes the affective intensity and exchange associated with these relationships to subside, becoming more neutral (Case & Maner, 2014) and possibly dormant (Levin et al., 2011). Indeed, individuals may retain a set of indifferent relationships, either because they are not presented with the opportunity to strengthen or because individuals have limited time and energy to maintain intimate relationships and, therefore, benefit from a network with a large set of peripheral, indifferent members (Methot et al., 2016).

Integrating an emotions lens (relationships→emotions→interactions→emotions→ relationships). As we conclude from our review, existing research suggests that both ambivalent and indifferent relationships likely display dynamics in the short and long term. We believe that emotions are a valuable yet underexplored mechanism contributing to these fluctuations. Established relationships may set the tone for the emotions that partners experience and express in the short term, which then inform future interactions; in turn, these interactions trigger emotions that guide the evolution and dissolution of relationships over longer periods of time (Ferris et al., 2009; Sias, Heath, Perry, Silva, & Fix, 2004). For instance, an act of generosity or expression of compassion by an indifferent partner can trigger momentary feelings, such as gratitude in an interaction partner—emotions which may invite the indifferent partner to employ approach behaviors, such as helping during subsequent interactions (Grant & Gino, 2010). Helping, in turn, can trigger emotions such as happiness in both partners, transforming the indifferent relationship to a positive one (Waugh & Fredrickson, 2006).

Similarly, an established ambivalent relationship sets the tone for future interactions by eliciting mixed emotions in partners, which invite partners to jointly employ approach and avoidance behaviors (Penz & Hogg, 2011). Some individuals may attempt to resolve the tension associated with this ambivalence with a response such as dominance (Ashforth et al., 2014), whereby they actively and purposefully express only positive emotions, such as compassion and guilt, that, over time, relieve the ambivalence and generate a positive relationship. By contrast, more recent perspectives on ambivalence suggest that individuals may not always respond with ambivalence reduction tactics (Bushman & Holt-Lunstad, 2009); thus, people may experience ambivalent relationships over extended periods of time. For instance, mixed emotions expressed in an ambivalent relationship may be "caught" by a partner, signaling to partners that they are in an unusual situation that may require a change in perspective (Rothman & Melwani, in press) but not necessarily leading them to alter their relationship. Thus, the social-functional emotions view adds precision to our understanding of, and invites the study of more complex, temporal dynamics in workplace relationships.

Stream 4: Measures of Ambivalent and Indifferent Relationships

Although scholars have developed a number of ways to measure ambivalence generally (Thompson et al., 1995), few of these measures are designed specifically for, or translate to, the assessment of relationships. Moreover, there is a lack of consensus regarding the "best" approach. Here, we review approaches where ambivalence and indifference can be isolated.

The most established measures of ambivalent and indifferent relationships assess them indirectly, with separate measures of positive and negative components of a relationship that are used to compute an index of ambivalence (and, less often, indifference). Specifically, the Social Relationships Index (SRI; Uchino et al., 2001) instructs individuals to rate a particular network member in terms of how helpful/positive and upsetting/negative they are when seeking task or emotional assistance. Another commonly used indirect measure is the Semantic Representation of Others Scale (Bonanno, Notarius, Gunzerath, Keltner, & Horowitz, 1998), which instructs participants to evaluate a specific person using two separate response forms, one with eight positive trait adjectives (e.g., loving, supportive) and one with eight matching negative trait adjectives (e.g., rejecting, controlling); these ratings are combined to compute an ambivalence score. Less commonly used is the Ambivalence in Relationships Survey (Thompson & Holmes, 1986), an indirect measure that compares the degree to which the partner is considered to be both positive and negative on a specific attribute (e.g., expressiveness).

Ambivalence in relationships is also assessed directly by asking individuals about the degree to which they experience ambivalence toward their relationship partner. The SRI includes a direct measure of ambivalence, whereby participants report about the extent to which they have mixed feelings toward each interacting other. This direct measure is significantly correlated with the number of ambivalent ties as assessed indirectly by the SRI and not significantly correlated with the number of supportive, aversive, or indifferent ties. Braiker and Kelley (1979) proposed a direct measure of ambivalence experienced in a relationship, with items asking, for example, "How confused were you about your feelings toward your partner?" However, this measure confounds uncertainty, indifference, and ambivalence. In contrast to the direct measures of ambivalence, indirect measures are useful in that they allow scholars to distinguish between ambivalent and indifferent relationships.

Given our focus on the social functions of emotions lens and its value for unpacking the antecedents, consequences, and dynamics of ambivalent and indifferent relationships, we believe that measuring emotional ambivalence in the context of workplace relationships is especially promising. The Evaluative Space Model (Cacioppo & Berntson, 1994), in particular, offers the most useful empirical tool toward this end, as it suggests affective reactions can be characterized by any pattern of positivity and negativity, and it has already been extended to the experience of polar opposite emotions, such as happiness and sadness (Larsen et al., 2001). To help inspire new scholarship on ambivalent and indifferent relationships through use of the social functions of emotions perspective, we suggest how this measure might be used more explicitly in the next section on directions for future research.

An Agenda for Future Workplace Relationships Research

In this section, we discuss new avenues that stem directly from each of the four streams and build on our earlier recommendations for how the social functions of emotions lens can advance workplace relationships research (see Table 1).

Future Research: Sources of Indifferent and Ambivalent Relationships (Stream 1)

We uncovered several sources that are ripe for exploration. First, our review suggests the workplace sets the stage for ambivalent relationships because it forces individuals to cope

Table 1

Questions for Future Research on Ambivalent and Indifferent Workplace Relationships

Stream	Research Questions
Stream 1: Sources of ambivalence and indifference in workplace relationships	Individual sources • What role do individuals' personality traits (e.g., extraversion, neuroticism) play in the development of indifferent and ambivalent relationships? • Are individuals who are embedded in networks of ambivalent relationships more likely to form ambivalent relationships? • Are individuals who are embedded in networks of indifferent relationships less likely to develop affective tone in their relationships? Dyadic or network sources • Through what processes, and under what conditions, do ambivalent relationships, or emotions underlying these relationships, spread to others? • What effect does relationship asymmetry or disagreement have on the underlying nature of the relationship? Contextual sources • What contextual conditions contribute to the formation of ambivalent relationships (e.g., organizational uncertainty, reward structures, hierarchies, conflicting norms and values)? Extending sources • Under what circumstances might the coexistence of approach and avoidance emotions, or the absence of these emotions, generate ambivalent and indifferent relationships, respectively? • Along what dimensions (e.g., instrumental and affective) do ambivalent and indifferent relationships fall? • Are different forms of indifferent relationships (those characterized by affective neutrality vs. those characterized by a discrete emotion that signals neither approach nor avoidance) generated by unique sources? What factors might shape the way individuals respond emotionally to social interactions (e.g., relational schemas, rapport)?
Stream 2: Outcomes of ambivalence and indifference in workplace relationships	Individual outcomes • What personal (e.g., affiliation, loneliness) and work-related (e.g., attentional focus) outcomes are associated with indifferent relationships? • What is a "good" balance between indifferent and close positive workplace relationships when predicting work outcomes (e.g., knowledge sharing, innovation, creativity)? • What effect do ambivalent relationships in the work context have on physiological (e.g., health, sleep, stress, fatigue), work (e.g., justice perceptions), and nonwork (e.g., work-family conflict) outcomes? • What effect do indifferent and ambivalent relationships have on leaders' proclivities to behave unethically or charismatically? Dyadic or network outcomes • How might an ambivalent or an indifferent relationship affect supervisors' objectivity and accuracy when evaluating subordinates' performance? • To what extent would a group largely composed of ambivalent or indifferent relationships influence the group's ability to be effective? • What are the implications for ambivalent and indifferent relationships on interpersonal trust? Extending outcomes • What boundary conditions mitigate or exacerbate the links between indifferent and ambivalent relationships and work/nonwork outcomes (e.g., generational differences)? • Can indifferent relationships generate ambivalent (approach/avoidance) emotions (e.g., receiving a holiday card induces nostalgia; an acquaintance accepting a happy hour invitation elicits anxiety)? Are different forms of indifferent relationships associated with distinct outcomes, or do they have differential effects on the same outcomes?

Table 1 (continued)

Stream	Research Questions
Stream 3: Dynamics in ambivalent and indifferent relationships	• What proportion of indifferent ties cycle in and out of individuals' social networks, and why? • What factors would contribute to the continuity (i.e., stability) of an indifferent or ambivalent tie? • What are specific short-term and long-term responses individuals might employ when interacting with or drawing conclusions about an indifferent tie? • How and when might displays of approach emotions (e.g., compassion, guilt) signal that an indifferent relationship could effectively strengthen into a positive one? • How and when might displays of avoidance emotions (e.g., contempt, envy) signal that an indifferent relationship is best dissolved? • How might an individual respond to the combination of, or vacillation between, approach and avoidance emotions from an indifferent tie? • How frequently do approach-oriented emotions need to recur for an indifferent relationship to shift toward positive? During what phase of a relationship might a single avoidance-oriented emotion cause a relationship to deteriorate? Is there a lag between the emotional display and the relationship transition, or is it immediate?
Stream 4: Measures of ambivalent and indifferent relationships	• How does measuring the short-term versus the longer-term dynamics in relationships differentially affect work outcomes? For example, do emotions fostered by ambivalent and indifferent interactions influence daily within-individual variation in work outcomes that are sensitive to emotions (e.g., task performance, OCB and ICB, job satisfaction and well-being, creativity) versus more stable, longer-term outcomes such as organizational identification and tenure? • How reliable are cross-sectional measures of indifferent and ambivalent relationships? • Do ESM approaches improve measurement of indifferent relationship by capturing momentary, fleeting emotions about inconsequential relational others that may be difficult to recall? • How does the ESG compare to ESM measures with respect to reliability and validity in organizational settings? • What are the correlations between direct measures of relational indifference/ambivalence and indirect measures? • How can utilizing social network measures of relationships ambivalence (e.g., multiplexity) aid in resolving contradictory research findings? • Where should emotions be positioned in the causal chain linking relationships to outcomes? Contingent upon the research question: Do emotions causally precede relationships? Do emotions constitute or define the underlying nature of a relationship? Are emotions proximal outcomes of relationships? • How can researchers assess relationship asymmetry (disagreement) between interaction partners using measures such as the ESG, ESM, and multiplexity?

Note: OCB = organizational citizenship behavior; ICB = interpersonal citizenship behavior; ESM = experience sampling method; ESG = Evaluative Space Grid.

with potentially discordant feelings that arise from having to work interdependently with coworkers who are also social partners (e.g., competitor friend). Future research could consider how the interplay of exchange and affect (Casciaro & Lobo, 2008; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Lawler, 2001) may provide a new and relevant conception of ambivalent and indifferent relationships. For instance, a positive exchange relationship paired with negatively toned interactions may elicit ambivalence, whereas neutrality in exchange and affect would engender indifference.

Next, as we noted earlier, despite the key role that context plays in relationship development (e.g., Ashforth et al., 2014), we know little about organizational cues that foster ambivalent and indifferent relationships. For instance, while research has shown that environmental uncertainty due to organizational change efforts enhances feelings of ambivalence (Piderit, 2000), it is unclear how these feelings then manifest in members' relationships, especially as individuals can spread their ambivalence to others (Pratt & Pradies, 2011). Furthermore, organizations' values and task and reward structures are contextual cues that can influence ambivalent and indifferent relationship development. Organizations that reward individuals for both collective and individual success may generate ambivalent relationships between coworkers who feel torn about whether to compete or cooperate with each other. Also, emerging research on LMX ambivalence suggests that hierarchical roles may foster ambivalence in leader–follower relationships (Lee et al., 2015) when, for example, a supervisor promotes followers' visibility but ineffectively offers feedback; however, more research is needed in this area. In addition, conditions such as utilizing colocated employees who engage in virtual communication may also contribute to the formation of indifferent relationships as a result of the lack of emotional connection between colleagues. Furthermore, emotions are often widespread and can create emotional cultures—behavioral norms and underlying values that guide the expression (or suppression) of specific emotions and the appropriateness of displaying those emotions within a social unit (Barsade & O'Neill, 2014). Emotional cultures that encourage the expression of ambivalence (Rothman & Melwani, in press) or the suppression of emotion (i.e., the display of neutrality or indifference) may encourage development of ambivalent and indifferent relationships, respectively, in organizations. Overall, future research should consider implications of these contexts for ambivalent and indifferent relationship formation.

Last, future research should consider the factors that might shape individuals' emotional responses to work interactions (i.e., moderating effects). For instance, research suggests that relational schemas (e.g., social harmony) can heighten or reduce attention to elements of a work interaction, and people who are highly attentive rely on interpersonal cues, such as vocal tones, to interpret and regulate their interactions (Sanchez-Burks, Bartel, & Blount, 2009).

Future Research: Outcomes of Indifferent and Ambivalent Relationships (Stream 2)

Our review of the outcomes of ambivalent and indifferent relationships uncovered three particular areas that could use further development. First, we advocate for greater attention toward exploring outcomes of indifferent workplace relationships. Although evidence suggests that indifferent relationships are largely beneficial with respect to efficiency and access to novel information (Fingerman, 2009; Granovetter, 1973), they may have other consequences. For instance, because individuals find it easier to make downward social comparisons to their acquaintances as compared to their close ties, indifferent relationships may bolster individuals' sense of self-worth (Wheeler & Miyake, 1992) and pride. Furthermore, individuals with a need for affiliation may be motivated to enlarge their networks by connecting to indifferent partners, which may generate feelings of comfort, positivity, and inclusion (Fingerman, 2009), as well as expression of approach emotions such as gratitude and joy. In addition, future research should explore whether indifferent relationships characterized by

affective neutrality are associated more with distinct outcomes than are those characterized by specific discrete emotions (e.g., boredom, surprise).

Second, while burgeoning psychological research finds ambivalent relationships are a liability for personal health and well-being (e.g., Uchino et al., 2012), recent management scholarship on the experience and expression of ambivalence trends toward its constructive effects on workplace outcomes such as creativity, openness to change, wisdom, adaptation, follower empowerment, and integrative negotiation solutions (see Rothman et al., in press, for a review). We encourage scholars to explore questions such as how the coexistence of approach and avoidance emotions might affect supervisors' objectivity when evaluating subordinates' performance or the propensity for subordinates to blur boundaries between work and friendship with their leaders. As ambivalent relationships are likely to deplete emotional, cognitive, and moral reserves, they may detract from a leader's ability to be charismatic or ethical (Barnes, Guarana, Nauman, & Kong, 2016; Christian & Ellis, 2011). Furthermore, identifying boundary conditions may help resolve discrepancies between health and work outcomes. For instance, because deleterious effects of ambivalent relationships are found in intergenerational settings (Luescher & Pillemer, 1998), we may see similar negative implications for relationships that also involve generational differences between supervisor and subordinate but not between peers.

Last, we encourage scholars to develop and empirically test models where ambivalent and indifferent relationships predict proximal emotions, which then predict work attitudes and behaviors. For example, an ambivalent relationship (e.g., competitor friend) might elicit an avoidance-focused emotion like contempt in a competitive situation, which can spread and influence task-relevant outcomes like performance and aggression (Melwani & Barsade, 2011). Thus, emotions triggered by ambivalent and indifferent interactions may influence daily within-individual variation in work outcomes that are sensitive to emotions, including task performance (Dalal, Bhave, & Fiset, 2014), citizenship behaviors (Ilies, Scott, & Judge, 2006), job satisfaction (Dimotakis et al., 2011), and creativity (Amabile, Barsade, Mueller, & Staw, 2005).

Future Research: Temporal Issues (Stream 3)

Whereas time is the medium through which relationships evolve and change (Shipp & Cole, 2015), it has not yet systematically been integrated into relationships research. If we are to advance theorizing about dynamic processes involved in workplace relationships, scholars need to develop precise theories of relationship formation, change, and dissolution as well as use longitudinal and experience sampling techniques to test these theories. We begin with a plea for more research exploring temporal issues related to indifferent relationships and then propose approaches for advancing research on longer-term and shorter-term relational dynamics.

First, evidenced by our review, relatively speaking, extant research overwhelmingly focuses on understanding individuals' responses to ambivalence (Ashforth et al., 2014). However, as we have encouraged throughout this review, indifferent relationships deserve greater attention, and one promising area includes exploring how these relationships fluctuate. Given that indifferent relationships are relatively unstable, as they cycle in and out of our networks and strengthen into more intimate relationships (Fingerman, 2009), individuals are

likely to employ various strategies to manage them. For instance, people with a desire for affiliation (Baumeister & Leary, 1995) are likely to respond by moving toward, or approaching, indifferent relational partners. However, other responses may occur, as well: Paralysis or avoidance may occur if an individual is already attempting to maintain multiple energy-intensive positive relationships, while others may vacillate if they want to enhance the tie but are waiting for the relational partner to display interest and engagement.

Furthermore, in response to pressing calls for more temporal precision in organizational research (e.g., Shipp & Cole, 2015), we offer solutions for advancing research on relationship dynamics. From a theoretical perspective, models of change and temporal dynamics are essential to our understanding of longer-term relationship transitions. For instance, Monge (1990) defines several dimensions that can be applied to the study of indifferent and ambivalent relationships. Relevant to these relationships are the notions of *continuity*, or whether a relationship is considered to be active or dormant over a period of time; *rate of change*, or whether a relationship undergoes changes over a period of time, as a result of fewer interactions or abruptly because of a sudden breach; and *lag*, or the amount of time between the onset of a change in a causal variable and the onset of change in the relationship. These concepts could help us understand how emotions alter relationships.

Empirically, we recommend daily diaries and experience sampling methods (ESMs) to capture short-term relationship dynamics. Although a handful of studies adopt this approach to evaluate positive and negative interactions (e.g., Bono, Foldes, Vinson, & Muros, 2007; Dimotakis et al., 2011; Rook, 2001; Vittengl & Holt, 1998), very few use this method to assess indifferent and ambivalent interactions (cf. Holt-Lunstad et al., 2003). These methods are useful in understanding relationships for two reasons. First, the ESM complements the often fleeting nature of interactions and the short-term emotional fluctuations that are generated in those interactions (Kitayama, Mesquita, & Karasawa, 2006). As such, relational episodes can elicit complex and contradictory emotions that signal both approach and avoidance—these episodes do not necessarily redefine the nature of the relationship as a whole but may still have influential effects. Second, particularly with respect to studying indifferent relationships, an ESM approach would help to circumvent the challenge of asking individuals to recall past interactions with coworkers who are not salient to them and about whom they do not have vivid memories (Frijda, 1994), as well as avoiding problems associated with retrospective reports of emotions (Robinson & Clore, 2002).

Future Research: Measurement (Stream 4)

Our review highlights the substantial variability with respect to how ambivalent and indifferent relationships are measured. Furthermore, we found it curious that despite the clear parallels between measures and terminology associated with ambivalent/indifferent relationships and those used in social network analysis approaches (e.g., "social network members," "ties"; Bushman & Holt-Lunstad, 2009), these domains have yet to be routinely integrated. Particularly relevant is the social network construct *multiplexity*, which acknowledges how relationships can simultaneously include multiple components (P. Ingram & Roberts, 2000; Kuwabara, Luo, & Sheldon, 2010). Scholars can ask respondents to indicate the extent to which their interaction or relationship comprises approach and avoidance emotions and then use social network analysis software to more precisely isolate indifferent and ambivalent relationships. This may help resolve contradictory findings; for example, Methot and colleagues (2016) highlighted that inconsistent findings about the utility of networks of

workplace friendships may be a function of examining their positive aspects without accounting for potential coexisting negative aspects.

Last, it is critical for scholars to pinpoint and accurately measure the juxtaposition of emotions relative to relationships. We can investigate the causal association between emotions and relationships using short-term assessments with lagged effects between interpersonal interactions and emotions on a given day or with longitudinal data points that map onto scholars' specific research question (Ployhart & Vandenberg, 2010). Accurate measurement is especially critical when examining indifferent relationships, as they may appear affectively neutral when emotions are measured as the content of the relationship, but they may bring to light certain emotions that are elicited by indifferent relationships, such as frustration or contempt. Accurate measurement also has implications for relationship asymmetry, or the degree to which parties in the relationship agree about its quality. Agreement can be important for information sharing, trust, and emotional support functions, whereas disagreement may represent a unique type of workplace stressor (e.g., Bolger, DeLongis, Kessler, & Schilling, 1989). To more explicitly integrate emotions into measurement of workplace relationships, we urge scholars to consider using the Evaluative Space Model (Cacioppo & Berntson, 1994) and the Evaluative Space Grid (ESG; Larsen, Norris, McGraw, Hawkley, & Cacioppo, 2009). These methods can be applied to field surveys to study ambivalent and indifferent relational episodes and the extent to which individuals feel approach versus avoid emotions during their workdays. Because the ESG can be both graded and continuous and is short, efficient, and minimally intrusive and allows people to separately report positive and negative reactions, it enables researchers to isolate indifference and ambivalence.

Conclusion

Workplace relationships are a fundamental part of employees' daily lives and deserve to be front and center in management literature (Berscheid, 1999; Dutton & Ragins, 2007). Given the relatively fragmented state of the current literature on workplace relationships, this review is relevant and timely, as it allowed us to reconsider current thinking with respect to how relationships truly operate in organizational settings. In particular, we combat the tendency to dichotomize between positive and negative relationships by modeling positivity and negativity on independent axes, thus considering a broader range of relationships, including indifference and ambivalence. We also provide a richer view of the emotional tenor of relationships by incorporating a social-functional emotions view. Altogether, we systematically analyze and unify the relationships literature, providing a cohesive resource that should inform and stimulate future theoretical and empirical investigations in this domain.

Note

1. Scholars use various terms for these functions, including *engagement* versus *disengagement* (Kitayama, Mesquita, & Karasawa, 2006) and *affiliation* versus *dominance* (Van Kleef et al., 2010).

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